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ABSTRACT

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WOMEN MENTORS AS LEADERS

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California established a Mentor Teacher Program as part of the educational reform package entitled Senate Bill 813 in an effort to encourage exemplary teachers to remain in teaching and to have a means to share their expertise with other teachers. This study, part of a larger research project with Far West Laboratory for Educational Research, reflects the information obtained about women mentors from one urban district in the southern part of the state.

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C O N T E N T S

1. Introduction

2. Historical Background of Female Leadership

3. The Challenge to Transform

4. The California Mentor Teacher Program

5. Methodology and Data Source

6. Mentor Roles

7. Leadership Behaviors of Women Mentors

8. Consequences of Working with Women Mentors

9. Recommendations

WOMEN MENTORS AS LEADERS

Introduction

Professional relationships among teachers have changed little over the past century in America. Studies of schooling have looked at the multi-faceted roles of the teacher; but one of the least studied, and perhaps least understood, is the role of teacher as leader.

The traditional structure of leadership is a major issue especially since other professions have documented the value and assistance that can be obtained from persons establishing comprehensive, mutual relationships which are achieved through specific efforts at creating leadership through mentorship.

Mentoring can be defined in a generic way as being "teacher, coach, positive role model, trainer, opener of doors, protector, sponsor, developer of talent" (Clawson, 1980). It also is used to describe a person as supporter, encourager, and strength in the organization . . . [toward] a mentee's competence and will to succeed (Hennig and Jardim, 1976, pp. 156-8).

Research into the California Mentor Teacher Program has given rise to studying leadership from more than one perspective. The terms "traditional or masculine leadership" and "non-traditional or feminine leadership" will be examined in this paper. What is meant by each? What are the differences? What are the implications of having two terms?

In Loden's (1985) book, she defines the terms masculine and feminine leadership. The Masculine Leadership Model is competitive, hierarchical, rational, and winning is the objective. The key characteristics are having high amount of control, being strategic, unemotional, and analytical. Whereas, the non-traditional model proposed by Loden is what she terms the Feminine Leadership Model. It highlights qualities often associated with cooperation, a team structure, is intuitive and rational, and quality output is the objective. The key characteristics are having lower control, being empathic, collaborative, and expecting high performance standards.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the concept of non-traditional or feminine leadership from the perspective of women who have been selected as mentors through the California Mentor Teacher Program. Although there is a considerable amount written in current literature that challenges the traditional masculine model of leadership, women still encounter a great deal of risk when they step out of the patterns that do not fit into that model. Miller's (1976) study talks about some of those risks:

> "In our time we have heard a great deal about people's lack of authenticity. What we cannot hear so clearly is that, for half the population, the attempt at authenticity requires a clear and direct risk. For women to act and react out of their own being is to fly in the fact of their appointed definition and their prescribed way of living" (p. 114).

Historical Background of Female Leadership

There are many stories of bold, daring, risk taking, challenging, non-traditional women who moved into the American world of work in the mid-nineteenth century. By achieving that goal, many women incurred much pain and ridicule; yet that also was a new male awakening of professional and intellectual competence of women in America. Examples are revealing.

In 1847 Elizabeth Blackwell entered Geneva (later known as Syracuse) Medical College. She had immense difficulty beginning her medical career as the first American woman doctor; but there were prominent male doctors who supported her, as well as did the eminent writer, Horace Greeley, who publicly promoted her through articles in the New York Tribune (Harris, 1978). Today, one might call those persons her coaches or mentors.

In 1876 Elizabeth Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed the national Women's Loyal League, which linked the cause of women with the cause of former slaves. At their first meeting, they stated that "there never can be a true peace in this Republic until the civil and political rights of all citizens of African descent and all women are practically established" (p. 94). The Civil War was a "major watershed" in the history of America because it forced women to under-

take new activities and responsibilities, to learn to run farms and to support families; it created the need for working outside the home in urban regions, and was the first time that American women sought work in civil service. Clara Barton, who was one of the first females appointed to civil service, organized first aid facilities and collected supplies which she distributed in hospitals and on battlefields (p. 97). The number of women becoming teachers also increased dramatically during this era.

There were others, but noted here are examples of women who had a pioneering leadership spirit, by paving the way for their own as well as for other minority groups to begin the painful process of breaking out of stereotypes and of moving toward greater spheres of leadership in American society.

A new role for women was emerging and has continued to grow. It has paralleled other movements, especially the Civil Rights movement. Both brought issues to the consciousness of the total American public.

Even though it has been nearly 140 years since Elizabeth Blackwell entered medical school, there is much effort still needed to expand opportunities for women aspiring to leadership. Hennig and Hardim (1977) discuss the complexities of women seeking to enter the realm of the executive role as

having to forego specific qualities related to their femininity to do so.

> In general the stereotype of the women executive is unfeminine — she is supposed to be aggressive, masculine, hard, cold and undesirable to men. A proposition developed from such a point of view would state that a successful woman cannot be a successful executive and a successful woman executive cannot be a successful woman. Many men — and women — implicitly believe this" (p. 96).

The Challenge to Transform

During the era preceding the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the traditional masculine model of leadership seemed to work very well. As a result of that judicial mandate, however, there have been lasting repercussions for everyone, particularly for women.

> "The corporate world as it exists today is composed of values, traditions, structures, and behavior norms linked to masculinism. Yet much of what masculinism promotes is by definition alien to the majority of women in our society" (Loden, 1985, pp. 26-27).

The context of life in America has changed radically during the last two decades. In 1980 a report published by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation stated that most Americans were moving in a path toward "virtual scientific and technological illiteracy" (Naisbitt, 1982, p. 31). Current educational reform issues are vital and insistent. Can non-traditional leadership take hold and stand alongside traditional leadership?

The need to recognize and develop successful candidates for positions of leadership within the teaching profession is one of the greatest needs confronting education today. There is an urgency not only to identify particular skills that will be required of leaders and potential leaders in the decades ahead, but also to provide opportunities to examine, identify, and assess current forms of leadership. As such, how can there be an integration of findings from recent action research?

New forms and styles of leadership are imperative. Maccoby's (1981) study states that the greatest significance in developing leadership is the nurturing of three specific qualities.

> [The qualities] ". . .correspond to the most positive attributes of the new social character: a caring, respectful, and responsible attitude: flexibility about people and organizational structure; and a participative approach to management, the willingness to share power. Furthermore, they [the leaders] are self-aware, conscious of their weaknesses as well as strengths, concerned with self-development for themselves as well as others" pp. 220-221).

Maccoby also speaks about the need to provide new tools to assist in training "on the job," because eighty percent of the persons polled by him did not presently work in the position for which they were trained.

Thus, along with the challenge to reform, there are further challenges to illustrate examples of non-traditional leadership through the study of women mentors and to demonstrate the effectiveness of women mentors as non-traditional

leaders in the California Mentor Teacher Program.

The California Mentor Teacher Program

The California Mentor Teacher Program, which was established by the California State Legislature as an effort to encourage exemplary teachers to remain in teaching and to have a means to share their professional expertise with other teachers, was part of the 1983 educational reform package entitled Senate Bill 813 which went into effect in January, 1984. At that time the California legislature provided authorization for a stipend of $4000 per year for each teacher selected as a mentor. During the 1984-85 school year, the first full school year of the program's implementation and the time when this study was conducted, approximately 3.75% of the teaching population in public schools were permitted to be selected as mentors, although not all districts chose to participate at the beginning of its operation. Mentors can be appointed for terms that range from one to three years, are able to be reappointed, and work in staff development capacities with new teachers, other career teachers, and "teacher trainees," those persons entering the teaching profession without formal teacher training. With few restrictions, each district sets its own guidelines, establishes a selection committee, chooses mentors, defines their reponsibilities, and guides mentors in their work.

Mentors must be tenured classroom teachers who continue to teach at least sixty percent of the time they are a mentor. Also, they must have demonstrated exemplary teaching ability as indicated by effective communication skills, subject matter knowledge, and mastery of a range of teaching strategies necessary to meet the needs of pupils in different contexts (California Education Code, Section 44491).

In the mid-1980's, the teaching profession faces a unique period in its history. As an example, nearly forty percent of all California teachers in 1982 were over age 45, according to the California State Department of Education (1983).

> "Enrollment growth, retirements, and resignations should create a significant demand for teachers at the K-8 level during the 1980's and 1990's. . . .We, therefore, have to conclude that within the next decade there may well be more teaching jobs than people willing to fill them. The shortage will not, however, be caused by a lack of credentialed teachers, but rather by the fact that the teaching profession is less attractive than available alternatives" (1983).

Serious study is needed that will address ways to encourage renewed professionalism among teachers and that can attract outstanding candidates into the teaching profession.

Teachers do not have much history of asserting their knowledge and skills outside the classroom sphere of influence, whether it be for a perceived localized need or for the opportunity to leave any form of legacy to the profession. Historically, educators have seldom deferred to

other educators in their midst to enhance their professional behavior even if peers have excellent knowledge or skills. Can it occur now?

Methodology and Data Source

An interview protocol was created by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. The researchers interviewed a total of seventy-two school personnel for this case study. Of that number, forty-six were women educators; fifteen mentors, nineteen teachers served by mentors, and twelve administrators. This case study was part of a larger research project for Far West Laboratory. In addition to the qualitative fieldwork, where each respondent completed a questionnaire concerning the potential and actual behavior of mentors, researchers also collected quantitative survey information that included sending questionnaires to seven populations.

The purpose of the larger study was to trace the adoption and implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program as it related to mentors' attempts to carry out their assignments or agreements and to play their new roles. The intent of this paper is to extract data that can support models of leadership that describe expanding leadership roles among women as demonstrated through the study of California female mentors.

Mentor Roles

There were a total of fifteen women mentors interviewed. Sixty percent were elementary teachers and forty percent were junior high and secondary teachers. All were from different schools in the same large urban district. A variety of mentor-mentee working relationships had been established.

There are many practices that can constitute the work of a mentor. Few do only peer coaching, staff development or curriculum development. Most successful mentors have flexibility of style and are able to gain acceptance with other teachers because of their sensitivity and responsiveness both to administrators and to the needs of teachers.

It is vital that linkages between mentors and teachers be made. McLaughlin's (1979) research concludes that new teachers need fewer, not more, responsibilities. "They require released time for additional training and for careful planning." Mentor relationships that provide feedback on performance and that encourage experimentation are necessary in order to break the pattern of teacher isolation.

Leadership Behaviors of Women Mentors

Proactive women mentors did not wait for their principal to set things up for them or to contact them. These

women worked in a manner that increased the knowledge of the principal and made statements such as "I keep her apprised of what I'm doing," and "I plan with him so there are no surprises." These behaviors are opening doors to new types of teacher-administrator collaboration for shared instructional leadership.

There were changes noted by women mentors with regard to relationships with principals. New linkages enabled the mentor to rise to levels of opportunities for leadership that had not been available before becoming a mentor. "My opinion is sought and respected." "He shares his ideas for staff meetings with me." "We talked about writing a grant proposal together."

Women mentors who were leaders have seen as an advantage the number of training options for themselves. Those women who exhibited a sense of willingness to attend the offerings found them to be useful from more than one dimension. One woman mentor expressed her feelings about training by stating, ". . .it's shown me a better way to teach. And if my primary job as a mentor. . . is 'How am I going to help another teacher?' it's shown me ways of being a better teacher myself and given all kinds of strategies on how to teach someone to be a better teacher."

Women mentors who possess the skill of timing know when to intervene, and did so with established goals and objectives.

As one stated: "It's not that I'm learning so much from some of these things . . . . but what training sessions do is reinforce my feelings about teaching. Timing might be described as that skill to act or to listen and to respond with ease, purpose and success as demonstrated by the results of the contact. Women mentors who studied adult development and learning theory were able to create a climate where change was accepted more readily than were those who did not understanding the timing needed to respond for best results when working with adults. Some of the women mentors' statements included the following:

> "I think, more than just being a better teacher, it makes me a better person because the communication skills that are learned are just tremendous."
>
> "I have made sure by inservicing on site that the staff has been made aware of the new labeling and semantics of the clinical teaching process so they can exhibit that and evidence it during supervision — clinical supervision."

A new leadership role exists within the mentor role provided through the California Mentor Teacher Program. It continues to emerge.

Successful women mentors have become resource brokers. A role that helped gain credibility was the of bringing together people and resources. The mentors shared, searched, wrote and developed. It was a step removed from much personal

contact. Some mentors functioned primarily in the role of facilitator, bringing people together, making things happen, dealing with anxiety, planning and problem solving. Facilitation allowed women mentors to become more visible. Some mentors took on the role of "coach" where the mentor talked with other teachers, observed, became a "buddy" to another person and collaborated in planning with another teacher. A role that seemed to be lateral with the role of coach was the role of trainer. Women mentors who were confident in particular subject areas and projects conducted training for groups of teachers and administrators at their own school sites and beyond.

Perhaps the role of greatest impact for women mentors is one called supervisor or the more formal "Coach" in which the teacher and mentor have an ongoing observation, conference, follow-up training program that is developed over a period of time so that the mentor can assist in the process of skill building for the mentee.

Consequences of Working with Women Mentors

Several dimensions emerged from the work with women mentors. Nearly all of those interviewed mesh with Loden's Feminine Leadership Model (1985). The attributes that emerged from work with mentors led women mentors into aspects

of cooperation, teamwork, leading teachers to greater quality output, and doing it all in an empathic, collaborative manner that does not rely on the use of coercion or control.

New and experienced teachers found women mentors who offered collegiality and a credible sounding board that was important for them to relax and feel better about themselves. It seemed that professional companionship aided teachers in having more confidence in their teaching ability.

> [The mentor gave the teacher]". . . positive feedback on presentation, classroom control, and parent-teacher conference. She was very supportive. . . . I am motivated to keep up high levels of learning."

> [When the mentor gave constructive criticism and sincere specific praise, the teacher felt relief, stating] "I relaxed."

Women mentors helped teachers adjust their practices to the situation. This sometimes meant clarifying what a person could accomplish during a given time period. Other times it meant a change for a teacher in the use of a textbook to create a better flow of learning. It also meant helping teachers restructure their expectations and level of difficulty thus creating more opportunities for student success and achieving higher expectations for teachers and students.

> "I was impressed with the simplicity of [mentor's] presentation. . . . Maybe I am confusing students by giving them so much more than is required."

> "I am tougher on kids [than is the mentor.] I saw that her methods worked."

> [In adapting a mentor's method of teaching reading] "It gave me feedback from someone who is very competent. I have a lot more confidence with what I am teaching."

Recommendations

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the teaching profession is in a state of real change. As men and women search for new types of solutions to the complex issues they face as education professionals, the mentor program offers a glimmer of promise. Often the reason change does not restructure is that it is done without a deeper level of understanding what is happening. As Loden (1985) states, "There is no sure way, no specific blend of ingredients that always work" (p. 225). Thus, there is need to view leadership from an expanded definition and to nurture those behaviors that are both historically traditional and non-traditional.

This cannot be done merely by redefining effective leadership. New programs such as the California Mentor Teacher Program have vast potential to emphasize skills and qualities of the feminine and masculine. It will require conscious support and effort, and a form of mentoring the mentors to elicit and increase the frequency of non-traditional behaviors that lead to greater amounts of teacher cooperation, teamwork, quality, empathy, collaboration, and high performance standards. This on-the-job training is one of the strongest gifts the California Mentor Teacher Program has to offer its profession.

Perhaps the greatest legacy the California Mentor Teacher Program can offer is to take key classroom teachers and provide the training and opportunity for them to see their world of education with new vision so that non-traditional leadership qualities can be legitimized for all, male and female. It is in winning with quality output that blends the best of both (Loden) models. To quote Dr. Sharon Connelly of the University of Southern California:

> "There is a need for vision and passion in leadership today. To inspire people to risk and create, leaders must be future oriented — focusing on new relationships between elements and people. I think that's a very feminine quality" (Loden, 1985, p. 243).

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